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By: Lt. Bernie Kale

### **Alaska National Guardsmen assists in Philippines typhoon relief**

**CAMP DENALI, Alaska—** Nine Alaska Air National Guardsmen from the 176<sup>th</sup> Wing's 249<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron are currently deployed in support of "Operation Damayan," the relief effort in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan ravaged the island country.

Pacific Air Forces placed Active Duty Airman and Alaska Air Guardsmen from the Alaskan based C-17 Globemaster squadrons on alert shortly after the initial disaster reports were received.

"We departed Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson on Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> and so far every day has been something new," said Master Sgt. Brian Johnson, a C-17 loadmaster with Alaska Air National Guard's 249<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron. "We ended up loading up two 42,000 pound vehicles and a pallet of water which we delivered to the city of Tagloban, capital of the Philippines."

Johnson deployed on the first aircraft from JBER that was comprised of Active Duty and Guardsmen and is still deployed in support of disaster relief. He said that while communication hasn't been ideal, they are making a difference with the people who need it the most.

Of the more than 1,000 refugees airlifted by his unit, one woman sticks out to him.

"On one trip to the capital, We had to leave quickly because we had a pregnant woman who was 11-days overdue and had begun bleeding," Johnson said. "We quickly transported the refugees to Kadena Air Base, Japan, where the pregnant woman was met with medical professionals."

There are currently three C-17s from JBER with a combination of Active Duty and Alaska Air Guardsmen operating jointly. The first aircraft is expected to return to Alaska Saturday morning while the two remaining aircraft and crews are deployed to Kadena, flying daily missions in support of the Philippines disaster relief.

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Photo Cutlines:

**Bus Depart:** Airmen prepare to board a C-17 Globemaster III on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Nov. 17, 2013 in route to support Operation Damayan. Operation Damayan is a U.S. humanitarian aid and disaster relief effort to support the government of the Philippines in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Sheila deVera)

**Salute:** Airman 1st Class James Justice, 517th Airlift Squadron crew chief, marshalls a C-17 Globemaster III to the taxiway on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Nov. 17, 2013. Twenty-six JBER Airmen deployed to support Operation Damayan, the U.S. humanitarian aid and disaster relief effort to support the government of the Philippines in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Sheila deVera)

**Refugees:** Active Duty Airmen from the 517th Airlift Squadron and Alaska Air Guardsmen from the 249th Squadron are currently serving in "Operation Damayan", storm relief work in the Philippines. This "Total Force" aircrew from Alaska has transported more than 1-thousand refugees to safety. There are currently three Alaskan based C-17 Crews operating in the Philippines. (U.S. Air Guard photo courtesy/Master Sgt. Brian Johnson)